

**Supplementary Notes for Tracy Beck & Craig Glazier, USDA Forest Service  
Oregon House of Representatives Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Committee  
January 11, 2018**

**Committee Membership**

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**Additional Fire Season Facts**

- In the Pacific Northwest Region we spent 40 days at the highest level of preparedness, meaning all available resources were committed. Nationally, we spent 37 consecutive days at PL5.
- The majority of Oregon's fires were ignited by lightning but about 44% were human-caused.
- We had numerous long-duration fires that spread in to other jurisdictions, including the Miller Complex on the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest that spread south in to California. Here in Oregon we had long-duration fires on the Umpqua, Willamette, and Mt. Hood NFs as well.
- The unusual fire activity we encountered in Oregon this year included:
  - o The Chetco Bar Fire made a 6-mile run in one burn period and ignited spotfires 1 1/2 - 4 miles in front of itself. The Chetco Bar fire was the largest fire in Oregon this season.
  - o The Eagle Creek Fire in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area spread 13 miles in 16 hours—much of that during the night—and jumped I-84 as well as the Columbia River to spark the Archer Mountain fire in Washington.

**Post-Fire Response & Timber Salvage**

- BAER teams identified over \$4.5M in immediate post-fire response needs to mitigate risks to life and safety, road and trail infrastructure, and other time-sensitive work. Much of this work has been completed but more remains to be done, and we are currently working to identify the full range of needs and funding to support that work.

**Initial Response to Fires:**

- The Forest Service has maintained 96-98% initial attack success rate.
- We respond to all fires and take the appropriate action, whether that is a direct attack or a more indirect approach that utilizes existing natural barriers or roads to contain the fire, or a combination of tactics that prioritize firefighter and public safety while protecting values at risk.
- The Forest Service implements strategies and tactics that commit responders only to operations where and when they can be successful, and under conditions where important values actually at risk are protected with the least exposure necessary while maintaining relationships with the people we serve. We expect that during such periods protecting lives of responders is the objective—we don't expect and we won't allow responders to risk their lives attempting the improbable. Each of us must remain committed to "stop, think and talk" before "acting" in any circumstance that feels like it may represent unnecessary exposure.
- This served us well in Oregon in that we had minimal injuries, no fatalities and fewer structures burned than in previous fire seasons, such as 2015.

## **Risk Management**

- We acknowledge the impact to communities that long-duration fires have. We need to work together to have a different outcome, and that will include conducting more treatments on federal and non-federal lands, encouraging firewise construction and community wildfire protection plans, and an all hands, all lands collaborative spirit.
- We will continue to be diligent to manage fires in a way that minimizes impacts to our neighbors and is in concert with our partners.
- It is important to recognize that low- and moderate-severity burns provide ecological benefits.
  - o We must get more fire on the landscape when and where it is safe and appropriate to reduce the negative effects of unwanted fires we have experienced over the last decade.
  - o In part, this means working with state air quality regulators and local communities to increase understanding and acceptance of prescribed fire, which is one of the best tools we have for mitigating the build-up of hazardous fuels.
- We need to think differently about the risks our fire management personnel are exposed to, recognizing that the value of human life is paramount.
  - o Our wildland firefighters will always be willing to put their own health and safety on the line to safeguard others.
  - o Agency managers must ensure these risks are justified by the potential to protect communities, resources, and critical infrastructure.
- We recently completed a Quantitative Risk Assessment in the PNW that includes all lands and will help with key decisions on where to manage fire and where to invest limited money on fuels treatments.
  - o We're only beginning to tap into the many uses of this tool, which will help identify areas for managed fire, fuel treatments, and allocation of resources.

## **Good Neighbor Authority**

- We are expanding our use of the Good Neighbor Authority to enter into agreements with state agencies to perform a broad range of forest management activities on Federal lands.
- Governor Kate Brown and Jim Peña signed a Master Good Neighbor Agreement in March of 2016.
  - o Since that time, Forest Service staff have been working closely with the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to develop and implement project-level agreements throughout the state.
  - o To-date, we've entered in to 15 Supplemental Project Agreements with ODF & ODFW on 6 different National Forests.
- We are still in the early stages of exploring the promise of this authority and look forward to continuing to grow this joint program and to plan projects and agreements strategically to maximize our collective productivity.

## **Environmental Analysis & Decision Making Reforms**

- There is a recognition—both inside and outside the Forest Service—that our current Environmental Analysis and Decision-Making processes cost too much and take too long.
  - o By eliminating unnecessarily burdensome processes, policies, and rules, the Forest Service can better meet our commitment to improve the condition of the forests and grasslands and deliver benefits to the American people.
- There is a substantial backlog of forest, watershed, and range restoration projects on National Forest System lands.
  - o These treatments are urgently needed to mitigate risks from fire and disease.
  - o With our non-fire workforce at its lowest capacity in years, improving efficiency in Environmental Analysis and Decision Making is critical to getting work done on-the-ground.
- The Forest Service is working with employees, neighbors, publics, and partners, to contribute ideas, experiences, and innovations that can help the Forest Service achieve our goal of reducing the time and cost of Environmental Analysis & Decision Making 10 to 20 percent by FY19-20.

## **Active Management**

- Active management of national forests and grasslands include the use of a suite of tools such as prescribed burns, management of wildfires started by lightning, timber harvest and other mechanical treatments.
  - o These tools make the landscape more resilient to stressors such as drought, insect and disease, and catastrophic wildfires.
  - o Improved conditions serve to provide the American people with the benefits of forests and grasslands, from jobs and healthier economies to recreational opportunities.

- Harvesting of forest and rangeland products plays a vital role in the restoration of forest and grassland ecosystems and sustains natural resource dependent economies.
  - o Coordinated state and federal action can expand markets for forest and rangeland goods and services to support forest restoration objectives and contribute to diversified, sustainable natural resource economies.
- Each National Forest has prepared a 5-year integrated vegetation management plan to help shore up our long-term planning and target treatments on the most high-priority areas.

### **Josephine, Klamath and Curry County “No Confidence” Resolutions:**

- The top priority Chief Tony Tooke established for our agency is “Being good neighbors and providing excellent customer service.” We strive to achieve that here in Oregon. We assure you that we will continue to work with these counties and foster stronger relationships so we can all work toward more resilient forests and communities.

### **Chief Tooke’s Five Priorities**

- The common thread in each of these priorities is a recognition that cooperation and collaboration are key to addressing our shared challenges, and making meaningful change for our forests and our communities.
  - o *Being good neighbors and providing excellent customer service.* Every visitor, forest or grassland user, contractor, partner, cooperator, permittee, volunteer, and citizen deserves our very best service. Meeting the expectations of the public we serve necessitates working efficiently and demonstrating integrity in every interaction.
  - o *Promoting shared stewardship by increasing partnerships and volunteerism.* We cannot accomplish our mission alone or by working only within National Forest System boundaries. Strengthening and expanding partner and volunteer programs around shared values is critical for a sustainable future.
  - o *Improving the condition of forests and grasslands.* We recognize this need and will use all management tools and authorities available to us to improve the condition of our forests and rangelands.
  - o *Enhancing recreation opportunities, improving access, and sustaining infrastructure.* Most Americans experience the National Forests and Grasslands through recreation activities. Currently, we can only maintain half of our roads, trails, facilities, and other infrastructure to standard. Over time, this diminishes the quality of the visitor experience. We are taking steps to address these challenges and create more enhanced, sustainable recreation opportunities, access, and infrastructure to better meet the needs of visitors, citizens, and users.

- o *Uplifting and empowering our employees through a respectful, safe working environment.* This means maintaining an environment where our employees are recognized and valued for positive contributions. It also means addressing problematic behaviors where they arise. We strive to be an employer of choice for all Americans -the kind of place you'd want your own children to work.